

College Writing, or “You’re Not in Kansas Anymore, Toto”

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Why aren’t you getting the same “A” on a paper that you got in high school? Because college writing is different:

1. The papers aren’t just longer, they’re also more complex: **a ten-page college paper takes four times as long** as a five-page high school paper (maybe six times), not twice as long.
2. Professors expect your papers to go through **multiple drafts and multiple revisions**, whether they say so or not.
3. **“Revision”** means something like this: removing $\frac{1}{2}$ of the first draft, replacing $\frac{1}{4}$ of it with something better, adding a new section or two or three, removing your old introduction and replacing it with your original conclusion, and then editing five unneeded words out of every single sentence. At least.
4. **All research papers are “critical” research papers**, so they require critical thinking: the student’s assessments, analyses, and evaluations are often as important, or even more important, than what the sources say.
5. In most papers, although not all, **direct quotations are a waste of space**; professors expect you to summarize sources more often than you quote sources.
6. Because you have to summarize, **you MUST be vigilant about distinguishing between sentences based on your ideas and summarized source material** (refer to your college handbook for anti-plagiarism guidance).
7. **Everybody expects good writing**, not just your English teacher.
8. A “good paper” is one that fulfills the assignment criteria; **the definition of “good writing” can differ from one class to another**, and so each new assignment is like mystery. Be Holmes, not Watson.

You have access to many resources to help you solve the mystery of college writing: your professors; the Writing Colleague assigned to your class; and the CTL Writing Fellows.

To meet with a Writing Fellow, make an appointment via StudyHub on the CTL website, or come to drop-ins from 7-9 pm (Monday -Thursday at CTL, Sunday at the Intercultural Affairs House).